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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 001469

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SUBJECT: CODEL TIERNEY MEETS WITH ANP'S ASFUNDYAR WALI KHAN

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires Peter W. Bodde, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: On March 27, Codel Tierney met with Awami National Party (ANP) leader Asfundyar Wali Khan. Asfundyar explained his plan to incorporate the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and said he hoped to see the Political Parties Act extended into the tribal region. He explained his party's preference for negotiation with local militants (not with Al Qaeda or Baitullah Mehsud) over the use of military force, but also added force was necessary when negotiations proved unsuccessful. Asfundyar stressed the need for a cohesive counterterrorism policy involving input from Pakistan's government, Pakistan's military, Afghanistan's government, and coalition forces in Afghanistan. He also asked for U.S. help in reinvigorating the jirga process and asked the U.S. to not turn its back on Afghanistan. Asfundyar feared Nawaz Sharif would be too confrontational with Musharraf, saying Sharif was banking on the new government's failure so that he could improve his party's standing in subsequent reelections. End summary.

12. (C) On March 27, Codel Tierney (Representatives John Tierney, Keith Ellison, Jim Moran, Betty McCollum, Maurice Hinchey, and Barbara Cubin), accompanied by Polcouns, met with ANP leader Asfundyar Wali Khan.

Vision for FATA Governance

13. (C) Asfundyar denied true democracy existed in the FATA. He described the Frontier Crimes Regulation as a British relic, arguing the practice of collective punishment was inherently undemocratic. Asfundyar pressed for the incorporation of FATA into the NWFP, saying this would help the tribal areas feel more involved in mainstream politics. However, he cautioned against hastily reforming the FATA's governance system, explaining that if the Frontier Crimes Regulation were abolished without a suitable substitute, the subsequent political vacuum could be filled by extremists.

14. (C) Representative Tierney asked for Asfundyar's vision for the optimal governance system in the tribal areas. Asfundyar recommended extending the Political Parties Act to FATA and creating a more robust local government system that empowered tribal elders. The ANP is up to challenging the religious parties in the tribal areas, he said, since his party defeated them in the center. Asfundyar stressed that the extension of political parties to the tribal areas was the best way to get the local population to accept

development in the region. He admitted some people would reject change, but dismissed these groups as a "nuisance" with little political clout.

The Carrot and the Stick

¶15. (C) Asfundyar described his strategy for negotiating with militants in the tribal areas, explaining he sees four different groups in the region: (a) foreign militants belonging to organizations like Al-Qaeda, (b) Afghan Taliban and insurgents like Baitullah Mehsud, (c) local taliban and (d) people living in the settled regions bordering the tribal areas. Asfundyar said his party intended to negotiate with the third and fourth groups, not with Al-Qaeda. He hoped to disengage people from the local taliban; he once told Musharraf that bombarding a village and incurring collateral damage--especially against women and children--decreased the government's ability to win the hearts of the tribal people. He emphasized he was not against military force and suggested more precise and targeted operations. Asfundyar described his strategy of negotiation supported by judicious use of military force as the "carrot and stick" strategy, saying the FATA "hasn't yet seen the carrot, just the stick."

¶16. (C) He said the ANP plans to address the situation of "foreigners" (i.e. Arabs, Uzbeks, Tajiks) in the tribal areas by differentiating between those who were there prior to 9/11 and those who came afterward. He explained that the foreigners who came to the tribal areas before 9/11 have intermarried into the tribes, whereas those who came afterward have few family links to the region. He also mentioned that one of the problems in negotiating with people

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in the FATA is that they are sometimes targeted as U.S. or Pakistan government spies. He gave the example of one malik who met with a U.S. official and was killed in an attack on his jeep only thirty minutes after the meeting.

Assessing Challenges and Opportunities

¶17. (C) Asfundyar explained that one of the problems with the region is that militants pay "Talibs" (foot soldiers) more than the Pakistan Army pays colonels or brigadiers. When asked by Representative Tierney about the source of this funding, he explained it was channeled from Saudi Arabia through the Hawala system. (Note: Hawala is an informal transfer system that exchanges money through an international network of money brokers). Asfundyar explained Saudi Arabia's population is willing to donate money to militants in the tribal areas under the guise of charity. He claimed that the government knew about the abuse of the Hawala system and could deal with it if they wanted to.

¶18. (C) Asfundyar said the border regions near the Durrand line have all the symptoms of an organized guerrilla movement: an ideology, militants prepared to sacrifice their life, organized political movements, a continuous flow of guns, ammunition, money, and sanctuary. He explained that the geography of the Durrand line is uniquely amenable to sanctuary because the border is so fluid; in some places houses are even divided across the border. This is why, Asfundyar stressed, there must be a cohesive counterterrorism policy devised with input from Pakistan's government, Afghanistan's government, Pakistan's military, and the Coalition forces in Afghanistan. The policy must be consistent on both sides of the border, he emphasized.

¶19. (C) Asfundyar said the U.S. was uniquely positioned to help reinvigorate the bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan by supporting the jirga process, saying "we need the U.S. to help us, encourage us, so that we can move forward." He emphasized his appreciation for U.S. support for the August 2007 Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Jirga

and said it produced many positive changes. Asfundyar was optimistic, explaining that for the first time in recent history, there were people with the same outlook on both sides of the Durrand line. He thanked the Codel for their interest, saying it was his "good fortune" to meet with them and continue cooperation with the USG.

¶10. (C) Representative Tierney asked what assistance the ANP hoped to receive from the U.S. Asfundyar asked the USG to not turn its back on Afghanistan. He said the ensuing turmoil would destabilize the entire region, not just Afghanistan. Asfundyar declared, "As a Pashtun, I am thankful for the Coalition forces because if they were not in Afghanistan, the country would have become an Arab commune." Asfundyar said his support for the Coalition forces hurt him in the 2002 elections; however, he continued to appreciate cooperation with the U.S.

View of the Political Situation -----

¶11. (C) In response to Representative Tierney's question about ANP's views of the other political parties, Asfundyar said he feared Nawaz Sharif would be too aggressive with Musharraf. He said Sharif did not care if this government failed, banking on the fact that his party would obtain even more seats in a new election. Asfundyar, however, worried this scenario would be bad for his party. He said now is the time for Pashtuns to positively improve Pakistan, declaring "if this system fails, in my province and for the Pakhtuns, this will turn into another Bosnia-Herzegovina." Asfundyar also worried Sharif was cultivating closer ties with the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) than with the ANP.

¶12. (C) Asfundyar remains undecided what role, if any, he will play in the new government. ANP party rules stipulate that an individual cannot hold both a party position and a government position. Asfundyar said he does not want to give up his party office to hold a government ministry; he thinks that a party should run the government, rather than the other way around, adding he could be more objective as a party leader.

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¶13. (C) Codel Tierney did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

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